

PRATHAM BOOKS
A Book in Every Child's Hand

The Cat in the Ghat!

Author: Ambika Rao
Illustrator: Ruchi Shah

Level 4



This story is about an uncle named Sandy,
Who likes his camera so much,
he always keeps it handy.

Let's rewind to when Uncle Sandy
was a little boy,
Unlike his friends,
he never dreamt of a fancy toy.



Lost in books that spoke of magical creatures,
Even in class, he never listened to his teachers.

As time passed by,
Uncle Sandy became a wildlife photographer,
While his friends became doctors, engineers
and dance choreographers.



Uncle Sandy didn't want to work in big offices,
He wanted to take pictures of snakes,
crocodiles and tortoises.
So he decided to leave
his family and friends behind,
And took off to the jungles with freedom in mind.
On his first expedition to the Western Ghats,
He had his first encounter with a mysterious cat.
Uncle Sandy has been on its trail ever since,
Hoping to click a picture of it, for evidence.



So he decided to revisit the Western Ghats,
Through its spiraling path in search of the cat.

The cat in the ghat!

The plan was to speak to animals along the way,
To get clues about this cat
whose colour he knew was grey.



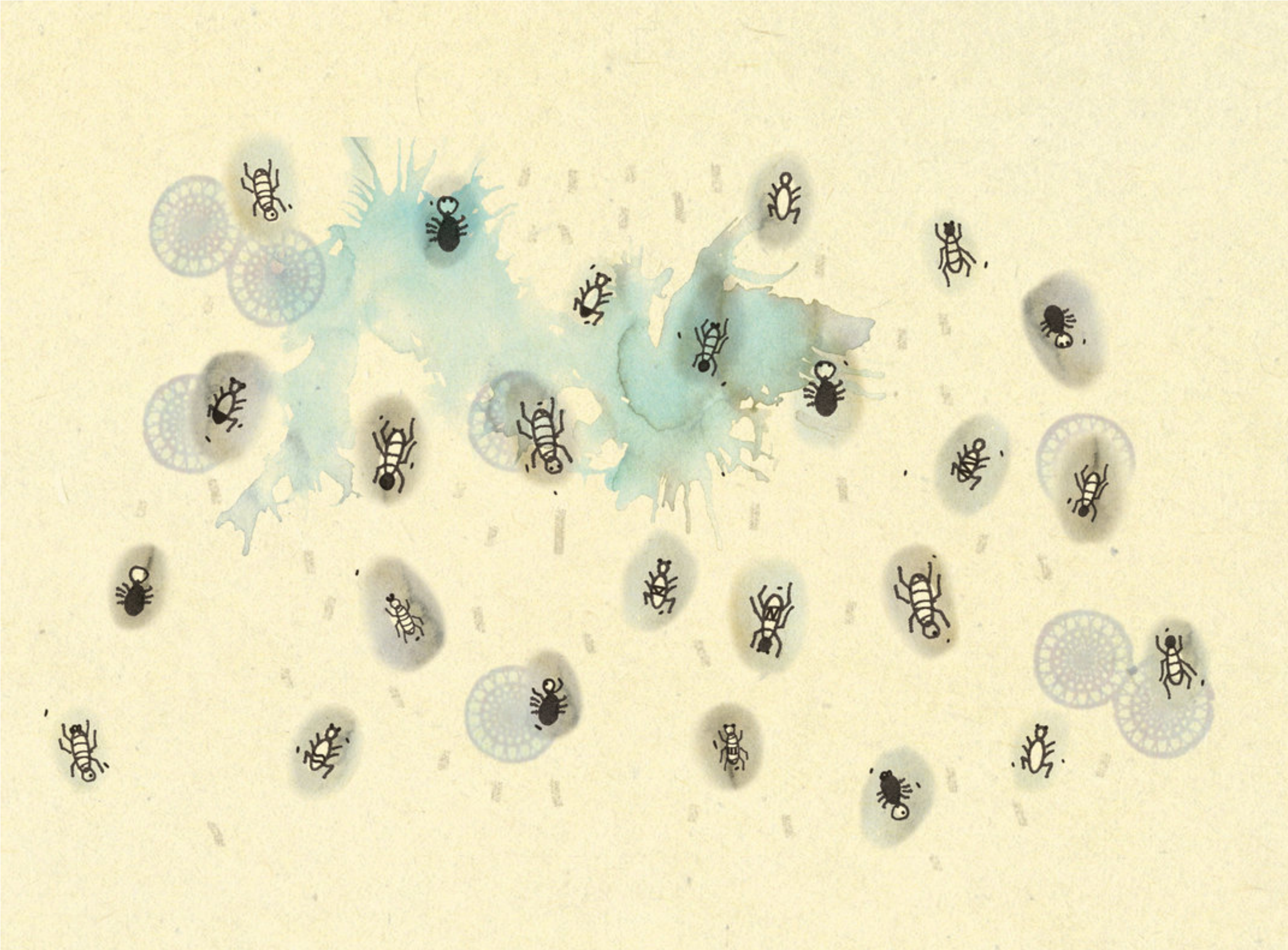
He began his journey
at the foothills of the Ghats,
With the summer sun so hot,
Uncle Sandy needed a hat.

“Let’s look for waterholes,” he said to himself,
He knew that’s where the animals would tread.

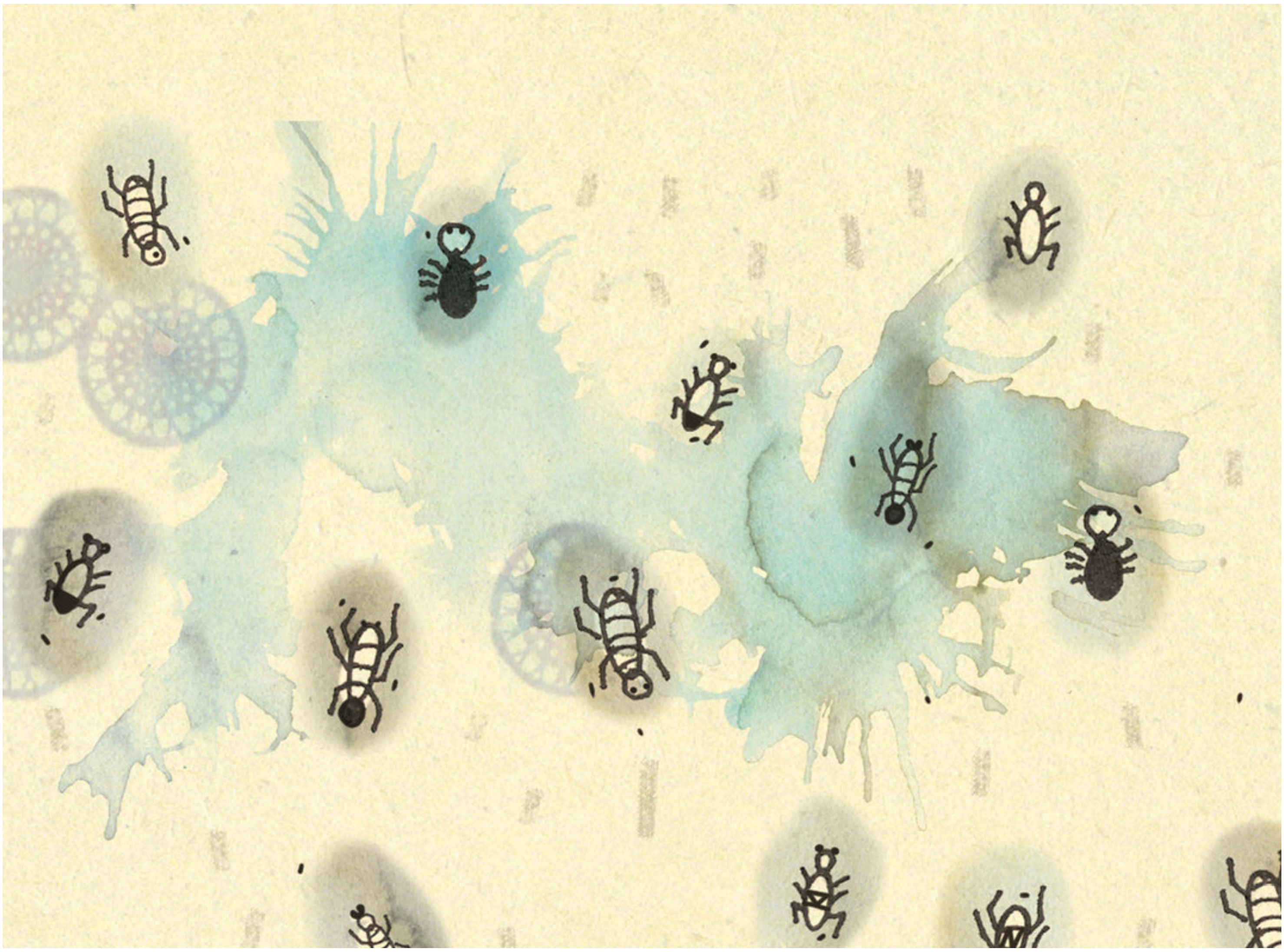


And guess who he got to meet,
The top cat himself, Mr. Tiger to greet.
“Oh mighty tiger,” he said, “would you have seen a cat?
It is tall, swift and the colour of my hat.”

The tiger didn’t have much to say,
He roared and looked the other way.

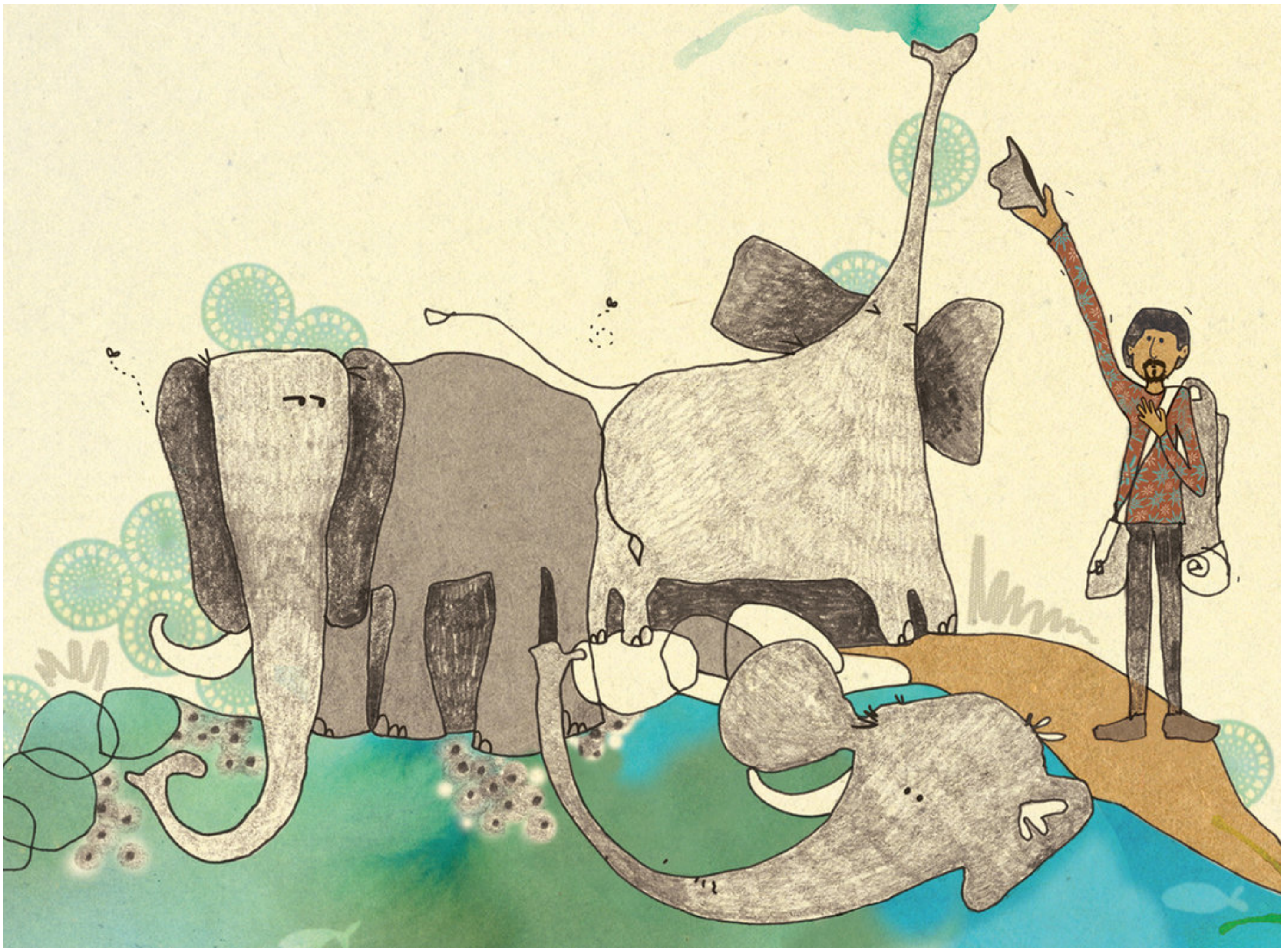


Phew! That was close, he thought,
Just as he was drenched by giant rain drops.
Along with the shower came a
swarm of termites,
Who were sadly eaten by ants, at first sight.



Rains in the Western Ghats
come down as waterfalls,
Waterfalls become rivers and
that's how there's water for all.

So, if we need water to drink,
Protecting the Western Ghats is the link.



What Uncle Sandy saw next filled him with glee,
A family of elephants bathing in a pond, yippee!

They were making the most
of the pre-monsoon showers,
Some were kicking grass,
others showing off their powers.

“Excuse me you all,” said Uncle Sandy, waving his hat,“Would you have seen a big grey cat?”



“No, no, no,” they all went in chorus,
“We haven’t seen him around here, we promise.”
Uncle Sandy found himself in the rainforest soon,
“The second level of the Western Ghats,”
he crooned.
“Bark!” came a reply through the forest dense.
“Oh that’s a Barking Deer I hear, it means no offence.”



Up in the trees chomping through a jackfruit,
He saw a lion-faced monkey, brute.

A Lion-tailed Macaque is what it is, he knew,
He’d looked through an encyclopedia of animals, woohoo!

“Help me find a grey cat, will you?” said Uncle Sandy.“Okay,” said the feasting monkey.



“Walk straight through the tall green trees
Till you find one with a giant hive of bees.”
“Under that tree lives a frog so rare
It lives underground, hiding from the
sun’s glare.”

“He’s a clever frog I’m told,
Knows the whole jungle inside out and two-fold.”
Uncle Sandy was so eager to look for the froggy
He left without saying thank you to the monkey.

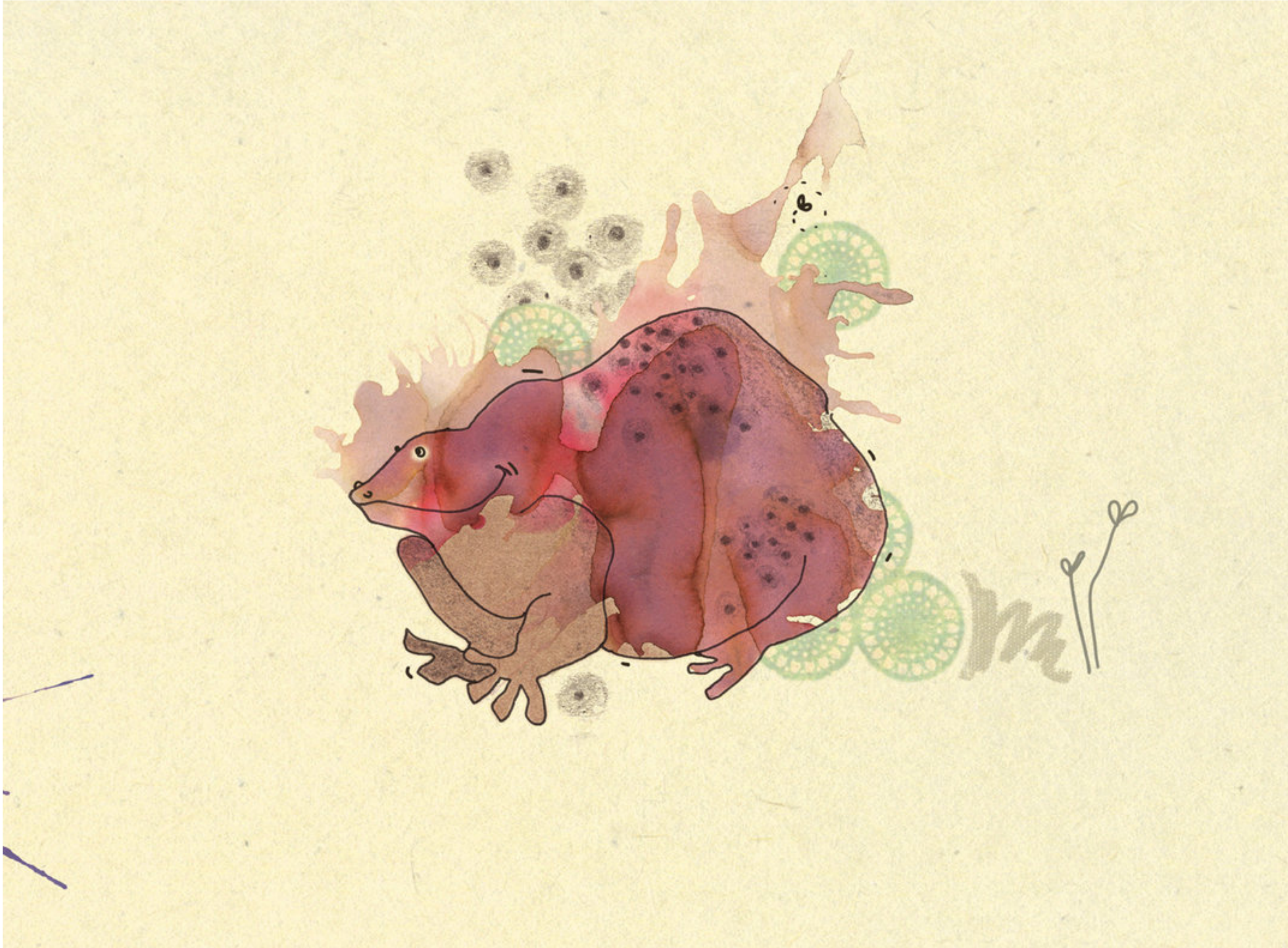


Left, right, left, right, Uncle Sandy marched,
Walking through a row of trees that were arched.
Then he saw a tree very tall
With a big beehive that was just about to fall.



“Ribbit ribbit,” said a frog,
But Uncle Sandy could not see it through the fog.
“Oh you’re the man
who comes in search of a cat,
I heard about you from a clever little bat.”

Said Uncle Sandy,“Please will you tell me where he is? I’ll give you an exotic flower, an Iris.”



The frog was purple in colour,
He’s the only one of his kind in India,
Nasika batracus.

The frog told him that he’d meet a tribesman,
Who’d know where the cat lived, and would guide him.

Uncle Sandy nodded, still in shock,
He had just seen the most extraordinary frog.



As he went further into the forests so thick,
He saw that the trees were getting fewer
very quick.
“People cut trees,” he said, “to make products very cheap, And the poor animals, they have no place to sleep.”
“These jungles are their homes you see,
just like our houses back in the city.”
Sad and disheartened by the state of affairs,
Uncle Sandy decided to say a silent prayer.



“Protect these forests, oh dear God, please,
Save them so the animals can live in peace.”

Saying so he carried on,
the high altitude grasslands waiting,
And that’s where he’d find
the cat from its hiding.



The remotest of places in the whole of the Western Ghats,
The grasslands so green, Uncle Sandy just sat.

Staring at the miracle of creation
and the beauty of this place,
This, he felt, was really his land of fairy tales.

Pat came a tap on his back,
He turned to see a face painted black.



“Who are you, Sir?” Uncle Sandy questioned
“I am a tribesman who lives here unquestioned.”

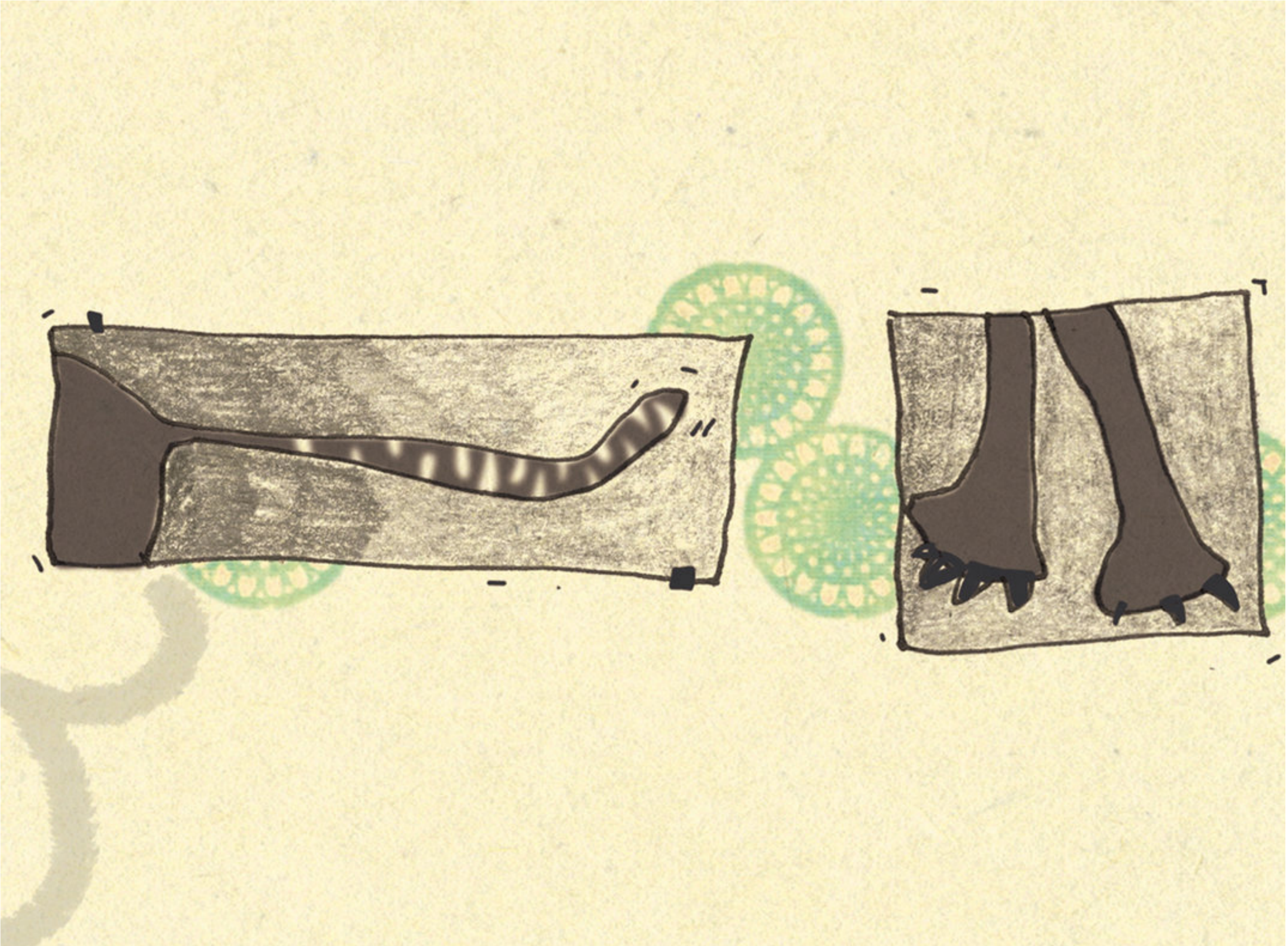
“Oh but sir, will you be as kind
To answer one question I have on my mind?
“Where can I find the special cat I’m looking for?
I’ve seen it only once before.”



“Are you talking about Pogeyan?” he said. Uncle Sandy wasn’t sure what he meant.
“The cat that comes and goes as the mist,
Are you referring to that elusive cat that exists?”
“Yes Sir, that’s the one,” Uncle Sandy affirmed.
He was so happy he could’ve drummed
and hummed.
“Aha!” said the tribesman, pointing to the mountains higher up,“I’ve seen the cat over there, all of three times in close-up.”

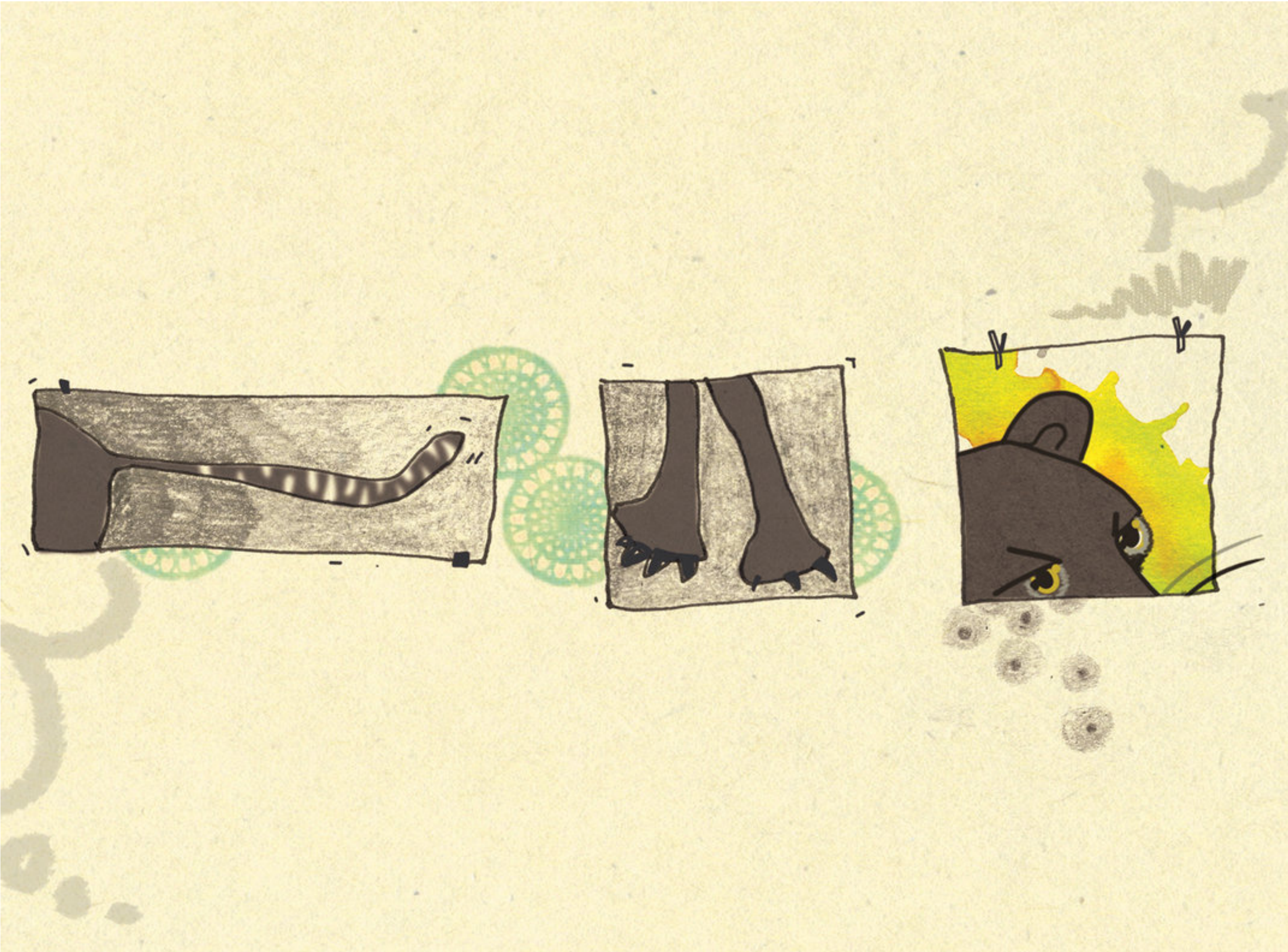


Uncle Sandy was feeling extremely blessed.
He did a somersault that left the tribesman perplexed.
Uncle Sandy was whistling to himself,
and climbing
When he saw two male Nilgiri Tahrs head-butting.
Looking at how well they'd adapted to
the terrain,
Uncle Sandy wished he too was born on the mountains.



Sure he'd find his cat somewhere around here,
Uncle Sandy decided to put camera traps all over.
Then he slept a good night's sleep
Under an open twinkling sky, on a hillock steep.

When he woke up, he ran to his camera traps and checked.
Yes, yes, yes, there were images of his cat!!
The cat in the ghat!



The cat looked the same as it did ten years ago,
Uncle Sandy was happy, ho, ho, ho!
That’s when he felt
a tiny snake crawling over his feet.
He was startled, and realised he’d been dreaming in his sleep.

Uncle Sandy prayed his dream would come true**Hope he finds his grey cat soon, don’t you?**



The Cat in the Ghat is a whimsical tale of Uncle Sandy going in search of a mysterious cat in the Western Ghats. It has been inspired by the real-life expedition by Sandesh Kadur, a National Geographic Emerging Explorer, wildlife filmmaker and conservation photographer.

His goal is to inspire people to protect and appreciate what remains of our wilderness. He is still looking for the Pogeyan!

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The Cat in the Ghat!
(English)

This is a book that takes you deep into the jungles of the Western Ghats. A wildlife photographer sets out to find an elusive wild cat and meets a menagerie of fascinating creatures. Quirky illustrations pepper a funny narrative inspired by real-life adventure. What better way to invite you to join his quest!

This is a Level 4 book for children who can read fluently and with confidence.